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ABSTRACT

Georgia's Needs Assessment Package, which has many sample forms, includes a procedure which helps to identify short-range and long-range educational needs. This procedure utilizes community participation which broadens the decision-making base and serves to legitimatize actual decisions. It utilizes the opinions of professional educators, regardless of their role and also utilizes student opinions. Data-gathering and storing activities are organized into a direct relationship with the learning process, providing an accountability record. (Author/BJG)

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT PACKAGE

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Office of Instructional Services
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Jack P. Nix, State Superintendent of Schools
1974

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PREFACE

If you are reading this package you should quite naturally have some questions about its purpose and what the information can do for you.

First, there is no legal requirement that you perform a needs assessment as it is outlined here, although, many funded programs, such as Title III, require you to give a detailed report of whatever method you use and who participated in it.

We do, however, recommend this procedure with whatever modifications local system characteristics may require. Here is what it can do for you:

1. This procedure has benefits extending far beyond simply fulfilling Title III requirements. As you read about these benefits, think about them in both short-range and long-range terms.

2. This procedure identifies your educational needs. Sure, you know what they are, but do you have the data to back you up? Can you give an accurate accounting of how (and how well) those needs are being met? You can here.

3. This procedure utilizes community participation. Community members share the decision--making load with you. This calls for extra work on your part, but think of the benefits. The legitimacy of your decisions about who gets what and when is greatly enhanced. Communications channels are opened up (but well channeled). The community feels closer to the education of its children, which becomes a more cooperative project.

4. This procedure utilizes professional participation. Every professional educator, regardless of his role, has at least one opportunity to make his professional opinion count.

5. This procedure utilizes student participation. <u>All</u> students, not just the high-achieving ones, can find a meaningful place in this process <u>if they want to</u>.

6. Everyone who participates gets a glimpse at the true complexity of educational decision--making. Opinions are easy to have and to voice, but this assessment requires that opinions be based on evidence from a variety of sources. The clear blacks and whites that the community sees become the complex shades of gray that educators live with.

7. The needs that are determined and the methods of addressing them become more defensible. How can you be accused of making policy in a chalk-filled room when everyone in the district has been given a role?

8. This procedure can be of short duration or long. Given the deadlines for Title III application in 1974, the time frames suggested in the manual are ulcer-producingly close. But, if you adopt needs assessment as a worthwile function, those restrictions can easily be adjusted to fit your decision-making patterns.

9. This procedure organizes data-gathering and storing activities into a direct relationship with the learning process. What data you have becomes more useful; what useful data you don't have becomes more evident.

10. This procedure provides an accountability record you can stand behind. Performance expectations are clearly spelled out in this needs assessment. You know where you are, and you know where you want to be.

11. The locus of policy-making authority remains where it has been. If you are ultimately responsible for school system performance, you should have the most important say about decisions. You do here.

12. This procedure shows you and the community the strengths of your school system as well as what areas most deserve extra attention. Citizens don't get to see both sides of the coin in many cases. Here they do.

I. INTRODUCTION TO NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A. Defining Student Needs

Needs assessment is the first important step in the process of educational improvement. Systematic and logical assessment of critical student needs will help to concentrate resources in areas when they will do the most good.

Let's begin by having the concept of "need" clearly and operationally defined. First, the system must decide what level of achievement is desired of its students. Second, the system must deduce what level of achievement has been reached by its students. The greater the discrepancy between the perceived level and the desired level the greater--or more critical--the need. This may be graphically illustrated as follows:

Desired Performance	minus	Current Performance	equals	Educational Need

For example, suppose that a standing goal in your school district is that the students score at the national level in both reading and math. Frequency distributions on the students in your system can be analyzed at each grade level, and if a satisfactory percentage of the students perform at above the level of the national average the goal has been met and need does not exist (Rather, such a result would indicate a need to revise system goals). If, however, too many students score below the national average a need is indicated.

B. Purposes of a Student Needs Assessment

The specific purpose of this package is to assist you in securing funds to increase educational achievement in your school district. However, the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation has determined five general purposes served by needs assessment which fall within the domain of Title III objectives and underscore the ongoing importance of a needs assessment procedure. They are as follows:

1. Identifying educational needs and determining their relative priorities.

2. Facilitating planning decisions regarding allocations of resources such as personnel, funds, and equipment.

3. Providing justification for applying resources to some needs and not to others.

4. Providing a standard against which the quality of decisons in applying resources to one needs area over another can be assessed.

5. Providing involvement which increases commitment to change.

Thus, assessment of student needs is a process which serves the district in more ways than simply procurement of funds. Only minor adjustments need be made to these procedures to install needs assessment as an ongoing process which helps assure continued responsiveness of the school system to the ever-changing needs of the students it serves.

C. Sources of Information

Within each school system exists a myriad of sources through which educational needs may be identified. Following is a list of suggested sources which, although not exhaustive, is indicative of the variety available. Since each system has its own unique characteristics, some may be more helpful than others in your circumstance. Further, your system may yield valuable sources of information not suggested here.

1. Analysis of statistical data
   Possibly the richest source of both general and specific information is statistical data kept by each system. Standardized test scores, attendance figures, census data, school finance data, and other figures are invaluable aids in identifying critical needs. The Division of Planning, Research and Evaluation at the State Department of Education has compiled such a set of data for every school system in the state. A copy should be in each superintendent's office.

2. Student opinions
   Although all school systems attempt to maintain open lines of communication with students, the realities of organizational structure and workload often clog these avenues. Personal conferences between students and personnel involved with ongoing needs assessment can yield qualitative data to supplement the statistical data. A wider range of student opinion can be obtained by devising a questionnaire which could be administered to all students. The specific content of the questionnaire would reflect the needs of each school system.

3. Former students
   Information from former students is important in assessing educational needs. Former students may be organized into two categories--graduates and non-graduates. Graduates who have gone on to college and vocational schools can be helpful in

assessing the extent to which the school district has been successful in preparing them for post-high school education. These people have the advantage of being in educational competition with students from other school systems and often from other states, giving them a valuable perspective on how well they were prepared to make the special kinds of decisions called for in that environment. Graduates who have not continued their education can be polled for their views on how well they were prepared for the occupational world. All graduates should be asked for suggestions as to what the school system might have done to better prepare them for their current situation.

Non-graduates can be an especially helpful group. A questionnaire for them should indicate why they did not graduate, how the school program might have been adjusted to meet their interests or needs, and their opinions or suggestions about how their problems can be avoided. Since these former students are often those whose educational needs were most critical, special care should be taken to elicit the most complete possible returns from them.

For both graduates and non-graduates, care should be taken to include some who have been away from school for five years or more, as they are likely to have had experiences which gives them a different perspective on their education than that of recent graduates.

4. School personnel
   Valuable opinions and ideas from school personnel regarding perceived student needs can be elicited through a combination of personal interviews, questionnaires and group meetings. Previous personnel can also yield valuable information, especially those who have exhibited an ongoing interest in the system's needs. You should be especially watchful for suggestions in the areas of administration and supervision as they relate directly to student needs.

5. Other educational personnel
   Opinions of persons such as superintendents, assistant superintendents, curriculum coordinators, and supervisors are valuable in that they see educational needs from a broader perspective.

6. Program evaluations
   Each school and each school system should review previous educational improvement program evaluations and note such factors as: perceived needs at the time of the program, extent of success in meeting those needs, specific procedures and resources used, success of each procedure, and recommendations of previous studies.

7. Parents
   Parents not only carry the financial burden, but they also have a vested interest in the educational product. Needs assessment is an opportunity to involve parents in the process in a meaningful way through interviews, questionnaires, and involving them in the actual process. In one such project a parent offered this reply to the observation that they generally are less than helpful, "The lack of communication between parents and the school could be the reason parents are so apathetic."

8. Business and Industry representatives
   Most of the products of the educational system eventually enter some type of business or industry. Leaders in these fields are aware of both shortcomings and strong points in the schools' process of preparing students for adult roles. Their observations will not be limited to whether or not the student can operate the machine or drive the cab, but also will include whether the student is ready to make decisions, can read well enough to keep abreast of developments in the field, know enough about human behavior to handle personal problems, and can fulfill the responsibilities of his work.

The sources listed above are intended as a guideline for gathering information about educational needs in your system. Although it doesn't cover the gamut of possible sources, it does include basic elements of both the school system and the surrounding community. The relative importance of the contribution of each group will likely differ with the individual school system, but the systems can profit by availing themselves of each group.

II. A STRATEGY FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The district must adopt an efficient and comprehensive strategy for determining needs and ranking them in order of their criticality. This strategy is so constructed that once the needs assessment committee is chosen, the process should take no longer than a week.

A. Criteria for Determining the Quality of the Strategy
To qualify for Title III funds, any needs assessment strategy must meet certain criteria, which are enumerated in the Title III, ESEA Administrator's Manual for State Plan Programs, pp. 27-28. Those which are applicable to district strategies are reproduced here to be used as a checklist during the performance of needs assessment.

1. An educational need is defined as the difference between the current status of the learner and the desired learner outcomes.

2. The strategy includes both long and short range goals.

3. The strategy includes specific activities which have been designed to achieve each objective included in the strategy.

4. Student learning goals are established to determine children's needs through the educational needs assessment.

5. Student learning needs drawn from student goals are behaviorally stated and representative of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning.

6. The student goals are sufficiently definitive to make them measurable objectives for student learning.

7. The strategy includes the elementary and secondary grade levels which will be assessed.

8. The strategy includes provisions for collecting data about student learning objectives from three categories:

   a) perceptions of the community, educators, and the learner with regard to the relevance and importance of these objectives.

b) criterion-based test instruments to determine the extent to which student learning objectives have been achieved, and

c) relevant demographic data about the learner.

9. The strategy includes provisions for collecting appropriate information on specific sub-populations.

10. The data collected will be manageable and current.

11. There are logical and defensible procedures established for determining criticality of educational needs.

B. Strategy Overview

Because of the variations in Georgia's school districts, (size, socio-economic characteristics, etc.) a district-wide assessment strategy in one step cannot be uniformly applied. For this reason we suggest a two-tiered strategy which will work for every system - the school level and the district level. All schools in every district may not do a needs assessment, but the more schools that do it, the more comprehensive the process will be. This section will be devoted to a brief overview of that strategy. Each step will then be explored in detail in subsequent sections.

1. Informing the Community

Keeping the community informed about the needs assessment project is a valuable way to gain support and insure the opportunity for continuous community input. Although it is an ongoing task, as a first step it will publicize the project and hopefully arouse enough community interest to provide feedback and volunteers.

2. Preparing Assessment Materials

Although the participants in needs assessment will all be concerned about education, few will have access to the hard data they will need. Materials will have to be prepared in advance at both levels of the process--the schools individually and the district. Project sites will also have to be reserved in advance so that such requirements as tables, chairs, and refreshments can be planned.

3. Selecting Participants

Participant selection will be the combined responsibility of the project director and principals. The guidelines suggested in this procedure are intended to help insure that everybody has a say. Community participation will come primarily at the school level. At the district level it will involve the project director and the superintendent and his staff.

4. School Assessment
The participants for each school will meet for two evenings to determine and rank the critical learner needs for their school. Responsibility for this phase rests ultimately with the project supervisor, but since he probably can't be everywhere at once, practical responsibility lies with the school principals. All assessments at this level should occur within the same calendar week.

5. District Assessment
District Assessment will be the joint responsibility of the project director and the district superintendent. With assistance from their staffs, they will collate, analyze, and rank the returns they get from each school in the district. From this ranking will derive the district needs assessment.

II. INFORMING THE COMMUNITY

Informing the community is the responsibility of the project director. Since the success of the needs assessment process depends so much on community participation, every avenue for publicity should be explored. The suggestions discussed below should get you started.

A. PTA and Other School Groups

School-related groups should be vitally interested in needs assessment and may prove to be your most valuable source of volunteers.

The most efficient method of publicity in this case would be to delegate authority to the school principals. They should contact the presidents of all school-related groups - preferably by phone or in person - and explain to them the purposes of the needs assessment project. The presidents should then present the idea to their groups at the next scheduled meeting. If possible, the project director or a member of his staff should make the presentation.

Time limitations may mean that certain groups don't have a meeting scheduled before needs assessment actually begins. In this case, the president of the club should distribute an announcement explaining the project and calling for interested volunteers. A sample NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENT is included at the end of this section.

B. Service Clubs and Other Community Groups

As with school groups, community organizations can be a valuable source of inputs into the student needs assessment project. Here we find a concentration of people who are the "movers and shakers" of the community. However, they are also very busy, so they should be called upon as soon as the project director becomes familiar with needs assessment.

The day after you read this would be a good day to begin. Again, the most effective method of contact would be for the project director and his staff to meet with these clubs personally. Where scheduling problems occur, an announcement similar to the one used for school groups should suffice.

Since there are so many community leaders associated with community groups, contact with them can greatly reduce the time requirements of the recruitment effort. They should not be overlooked.

C. Utilization of Media

The importance of media like television, radio, and newspapers is a recurrent topic today. Few people in the community are not reached by at least one of these.

The project director should be prepared with news announcements at least two weeks prior to the school committee meetings. An announcement of the critical student needs of the district should follow their selection by the district superintendent and the project director.

Prior to actual assessment the news releases should contain the following:

Brief explanation of the project

Dates and places for meeting

Request for volunteers and community support.

Sample news releases for all media are at the end of this section.

D. Notices to Parents

Even such a comprehensive effort of informing the community as is suggested here may miss some valuable sources of input. Notices should be sent from each school to parents by way of their children in school.

The notice should contain basically the same information as the Needs Assessment Project Announcement for school groups. You should send the notices at least a week before the project is scheduled to begin.

SAMPLE NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENT

The (name of school district) is presently conducting a project to determine the critical educational needs of the students in our community. The project director (name) and district superintendent (name) wished to inform all members of (name of organization) of this project in person, but it will begin before our next meeting. Therefore, they have asked me to pass along this information to you.

The needs assessment project is a worthwhile one which deserves our support and participation. In it, the school wants to get the opinions of the community about those student needs which would stand the most improvement.

The community portion of this project will only take two evenings during the week of _____. All persons interested in participating should fill out the short form below and return it to me, or call the school at (telephone number) and tell them you want to volunteer.

Your efforts will directly influence the quality of education for the students in (name of school).

Thank you,

Signature

I will ___ will not ___ participate in the needs assessment project.

My phone number for confirmation is _____.

Signature _____

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE #1 - TO ANNOUNCE
THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROJECT

LOCAL RESIDENTS ASKED TO ASSIST IN
DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

(name of superintendent) announced today the beginning of an intensified effort to improve educational opportunities in (name of district) schools. Under provisions of Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, local systems are eligible to receive grants to install in their schools validated or proven educational programs which in another setting have been successful in meeting students' educational needs.

The difference between the local system's funding level and the actual cost of installing the programs can be requested from Title III funding sources.

An important first step in receiving this aid, according to (name of superintendent), is that members from all segments of the community assist local school officials in determining what are the most critical student needs. A series of meetings will be held during the week of (insert dates) at each elementary and high school in the district.

Any citizen who is interested in participating in this worthwhile project should contact (name of authorized person) before (date) at (phone no.) or write to (address).

(name of superintendent) said that community participation is essential since it will assist school officials in learning what residents believe are the most pressing needs of youngsters in their area.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE #2 - TO ANNOUNCE
THE PROGRESS OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROJECT

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS RECEIVE CLOSE SCRUTINY

(name of superintendent) announced today that a concentrated system-wide effort has begun to determine the most critical student needs in (name of school district). Residents from all segments of the community are meeting this week at each elementary and high school in the district to air their opinions and concerns. According to (name of superintendent), these meetings will result in a more realistic list of needs and supply the schools with new directions in their attempts to improve the quality of education in the area.

Next week, (name of superintendent) and his staff will compile these lists and use them to apply for additional funding to finance local programs which address the identified needs. He stated that only programs which have been proven in other educational settings would be considered for adoption here. He also stated that without the community support he has seen at the meetings, such plans for improvement would have been impossible.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE #3 - TO ANNOUNCE THE CONCLUSION OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROJECT

CRITICAL STUDENT NEEDS IDENTIFIED

The first Needs Assessment Project for (name of school district) has come to a successful conclusion. Members of all segments of the community met last week in every elementary and high school in the district to advise school officials on the most critical needs of the students in the area.

As a result, the superintendent listed the needs as:

(insert list of most critical needs)

The superintendent stated that he will apply for funding under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to install programs in the schools to meet these needs. He announced that further assessments will be done periodically to insure that the school system remains responsive to the changing needs of the area.

He further stated that, even if funding was not immediately forthcoming, the needs assessment had been invaluable in determining when the maximum resources of the school system should be directed.

IV. PREPARING ASSESSMENT MATERIALS

Educational needs fall into two categories--"felt" needs and validated needs. "Felt" needs are usually generated from the community. They are "gut feelings" about what needs to be improved. Just as it doesn't take a degree in art to know what you like in paintings, so it doesn't take a degree in education to know what you like in achievement results. In most cases, "felt" needs prove to be accurate when backed by data.

That's what validated needs are -- needs generated from relevant data gathered about current conditions in the school system. They generate, temper, and give validity to felt needs.

A. School Materials

Participants at the school level are going to come into the process with largely "felt" needs. They will require as much data as possible to translate these into validated needs. Data sources will vary with the district, but below are listed several possibilities:

1. School testing data

   Each principal should compile data derived from achievement tests, diagnostic tests, physical fitness tests, and statewide testing data for his school. Since raw data takes time and expertise to consume, the principal should compile the data using a format similar to that used in the System Profile provided by the Division of Planning, Research and Evaluation in SDE. All categories will not be necessary for each system.

2. Goals and objectives

   Each principal should provide a list of goals and objectives. Two lists of goals are provided at the end of this section. The Product Goals are taken from Goals for Education in Georgia. The second list is from Phi Delta Kappa. Of course, neither is definitive, and other goals that you may have should also be included. Also, at the end of this section is a list of addresses from which additional objectives may be obtained.

   It is often difficult to translate a felt or validated need into words. Goals and objectives statements help provide the words.

3. Community concerns

   Service organizations, the PTA, local newspapers and other sources provide valuable information on what the community thinks--both good and bad--about its schools. Especially if such opinions have surfaced recently, they should be compiled by the principal for distribution to participants.

A most important and often overlooked source of community concerns is students who have withdrawn from or dropped out of school. Another excellent source is recent graduates. Procedures for gathering information from both sources are at the end of this section.

4. Demographic data
System-wide demographic data is available from the Division of Planning, Research and Evaluation System Profile. It may or may not be available for each school. If not, system-wide data can serve as a useful guide.

B. District Office Materials
School-level needs assessments need to be combined and weighed to arrive at district needs.

To do this, the project director and his staff must provide themselves with system-wide data parallel to that which each school used. The major difference is that the scope is larger--the school district. This means you will need system-wide test data (available from Statewide Testing, SDE), demographic data (see the System Profile), and community concerns.

PRODUCT GOALS FROM GOALS FOR EDUCATION IN GEORGIA
(Adopted by the State Department of Education, 1970)

The individual . . .

possesses the knowledge and skills of an intelligent consumer of goods and services;

possesses knowledge, understanding and skills pertaining to personal finance and money management;

possesses the ability and desire to use effectively the learning resources of the community;

is aware of the social, economic and political implications of technology;

possesses knowledge of the principle economic, social and political systems of the world;

recognizes the role of the family, religions and community organizations in defining values in a changing society;

possesses the motivation to make the community a desirable place in which to live;

possesses knowledge and understanding of production, distribution and consumption of agricultural and industrial products;

supports the free and voluntary exercise of religious choice.

The individual . . .

possesses the ability to read, speak, write and listen;

possesses knowledge and understanding of mathematics;

possesses an understanding of the structure of language and is able to use this and other skills to communicate feelings, ideas and information;

possesses an understanding of and respect for himself--his abilities, interests, values, aspirations, limitations, and uses this understanding to set personal goals;

possesses a personal value system that enables him to define desirable change on the basis of his understanding of the capacity of man to adjust to change and the techniques to control change;

values and recognizes creativity as a basic human need;

possesses a personal philosophy of his reason for existence;

knows and practices socially acceptable behavior;

possesses the knowledge, skill, ability and desire for life-long growth in arts of his choice;

possesses the attitudes and skills to pursue learning as a life-long process;

possesses the ability to analyze, synthesize, draw conclusions, make decisions and secure information from a wide variety of sources;

possesses a personal value system which maintains individual integrity in group relationships;

possesses the attitudes and personal values that enable him to cope with adversity;

understands and accepts the relationships of rights and responsibilities;

possesses knowledge, understanding and appreciation of his heritage;

possesses a knowledge, understanding and appreciation of, and exhibits an interest in, science and the role of science in our society;

possesses the ability to make responsible decisions regarding the use of time;

values and seeks sound mental and physical health through good nutrition; understands biological processes and functions; understands the effects of drugs, alcohol and tobacco; knows how, when and where to secure medical services; and understands the emotional and social aspects of human sexuality.

should be able to establish warm personal relationships away from the job with neighbors and friends.

The individual . . .

appreciates the value of the occupations of others;

possesses the ability to adjust to changes in human relationships brought about by geographic and social mobility;

possesses the social willingness to live in a racially integrated society;

possesses the ability and desire to participate in community service activities;

possesses the ability to understand and cope with dissent;

possesses a personal value system which emphasizes concern for one's fellow man;

recognizes that every man, unless restricted by his own actions, has the right to participate actively and freely in social, political and economic affairs so long as the rights of others are not violated;

possesses an understanding and appreciation of racial, religious and national groups and their contributions to the history and development of our culture;

accepts the responsibility of preserving the rights and property of others;

possesses the ability to identify common goals and to cooperate with others in their attainment.

The individual . . .

understands the structure and functions of local, state and national government;

understands and accepts the responsibilities and privileges of American citizenship;

possesses a commitment to law and understands the processes and purposes of law and the American judicial system;

possesses knowledge and understanding of international relations;

understands freedom as the right to make choices within the framework of concern for the general welfare;

understands the citizen s role in decision-making processes of American government and politics;

is committed to the values defined in The Bill of Rights;

knows and understands concepts of taxation;

possesses knowledge and understanding of current political issues;

considers public office as a public trust;

understands how public education is administered;

is committed to the concept of accountability for the use of public resources;

knows how to secure and utilize community services;

respects the offices of appointed and elected officials;

seeks opportunities to participate in the governmental processes.

The individual . . .

uses knowledge and skills in the arts and sciences to enhance his own natural and physical environment;

possesses an understanding of how technology alters the natural and physical environment;

possesses an appreciation of the beauty of nature;

values and demands the conservation and proper utilization of land and other natural resources;

possesses knowledge and understanding of man as an integral part of nature, and as such the quality of life is proportional to the harmony he achieves with all aspects of his natural environment;

The individual . . .

understands and values the functions, relationships and responsibilities of labor and management in a free society;

possesses knowledge and understanding of workmen's compensation, social security, retirement systems, employment insurance and other employee benefits;

possesses the necessary knowledge of how and where to seek employment and the skills to be able to apply for a job and participate in a job interview;

possesses knowledge and understanding of a wide variety of occupational fields;

possesses a tentative occupational or career goal and an education/training plan to achieve this goal;

is able to function as a follower, co-worker or a leader in work;

possesses pride in workmanship and accomplishment;

respects and cares for the property of his employer and fellow workers;

possesses ability to adjust to changing jobs and job requirements;

recognizes the impact of science and technology on jobs and job requirements;

knows where to obtain additional education and training;

understands and accepts the necessity of avoiding discrimination in employment practices.

The individual . . .

recognizes recreation as a vital part of human life including participation in recreational activities which provide physical fitness throughout life;

uses as a listener, participant, and/or observer one or more of the arts or crafts in recreational and leisure time activity, e.g., music, visual arts, drama, woodworking;

possesses sufficient skill and interest in an area of activity other than that of his vocational choice to be able to make constructive use of leisure time in some avocational pursuit;

is able to participate alone or with others in recreational and leisure time activities.

SOME SOURCES OF LISTS OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

No matter how conscientious school districts are in identifying and preparing educational objectives, they often risk overlooking important areas due to lack of time and resources. One way to alleviate this problem is for school districts to avail themselves of a variety of organizations which have published lists of educational objectives and goals. Below are some suggested sources of these lists.

Comprehensive Achievement Monitoring
Robert Reilly, Chief, Bureau of School and Cultural Research
University of the State of New York
State Education Department
Albany, New York 12224

CTB/McGraw-Hill
Department of Programs and Services
Del Monte Research Park
Monterey, California 93940

Instruction Objectives Exchange (IOX)
Box 24095
Los Angeles, California 90024

Minnemost Curriculum Project
Wells Hively
Department of Psychology
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Southwest Regional Laboratory for Educational Research & Development
4665 Lampson Avenue
Los Alamitos, California 90720

Educational Commission of the States
National Assessment Publications
300 Lincoln Tower
1860 Lincoln Street
Denver, Colorado 80230

Educational Progress
Educational Development Corporation
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P. O. Box 45663
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Training Project
Center for Study of Evaluation (CSE)
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Los Angeles, California

Richard L. Zweig Associates, Inc.
20800 Beach Boulevard
Huntington Beach, California

Educational Testing Service
Princeton, New Jersey

GATHERING DATA ON STUDENT WITHDRAWALS AND DROPOUTS

Follow-up information on withdrawals and dropouts can be a valuable source for determining educational needs. The person should be asked why he withdrew and whether he would have remained if other program offerings had been available to him. If you do not presently have a program of withdrawal interviews, it is recommended that you initiate the procedure.

Procedure

1. Withdrawal interviews
   a. Contact persons in your institutions who handle withdrawals. (counselors, principals, etc.)
   b. Develop a withdrawal data form. (A sample form is attached.)
   c. Circulate form to interested personnel for comments and revisions.
   d. Make withdrawal interview part of the standard withdrawal process.
   e. Compile and analyze withdrawal interview data.
2. Dropout survey
   a. Identify students having left your institutions within the past five years--obtain mailing addresses.
   b. Develop a survey instrument and cover letter to be mailed to all students being surveyed. (A sample form is attached.)
   c. Execute the survey.
   d. Compile and analyze the data.

WITHDRAWAL DATA FORM

General Information:

1. Name _____ Date of Withdrawal _____
(Last) (First) (Initial) Date of Enrollment _____

2. Curriculum Enrolled in _____

3. Sex: Male _____ Female _____

Reasons for Withdrawal:

Note: Please check each of the statements that you feel describe your reasons for withdrawing.

4. ___ I withdrew for financial reasons.

5. ___ I had to work too many hours to go to school.

6. ___ I had difficulty with transportation.

7. ___ I had academic difficulties.

8. ___ I feel that poor study habits contributed to my withdrawal.

9. ___ I entered, or plan to enter, the military service.

10. ___ I accepted full-time employment as _____
(Title of Job)

_____
(Employer)

11. ___ I had a personality conflict with an instructor.

12. ___ I had to withdraw for health reasons.

13. ___ Personal or family problems contributed to my withdrawal.

14. ___ The course of study I was required to follow was not what I expected.

a. ___ too much theory and not enough lab time.

b. ___ course content was covered too rapidly.

c. ___ too much homework.

d. ___ too many general studies courses required.

e. ___ too many related courses required.

f. ___ work load involved was too great.

g. ___ skill levels required too high or unattainable.

h. ___ I was not interested in the material and, therefore, did not do the work involved.

i. ___ I did not feel the work prepared me for anything.

j. ___ others: (please specify) _____

_____

15. ___ The school doesn't offer a course of study in the field I plan to enter, which is: (specify) _____

16. ___ I would have stayed had a program in _____ been offered.

17. ___ I decided that school or college is not for me. Why: ____

_____

18. ___ The instructors expected too much of the students.

19. ___ I was not prepared for the work required.

a. ___ Needed more preparation in elementary school.

b. ___ Needed early educational guidance.

20. ___ There is too much duplication of material from class to class.

21. ___ I could not schedule evening classes.

22. ___ I needed more individual help from the instructor.

23. ___ The environment of the school was too oppressive.

Additional Comments

Please feel free to make any comments regarding the educational program at (name of school). Most important, can you think of any changes that we can make that would have helped you to continue your education?

PROCEDURE FOR DROPOUT INTERVIEWS

People who have dropped out of school often have negative attitudes about school and the learning process, making them both a rich source of information about critical needs and a difficult source from which to glean it. We include here a sample letter and survey for dropouts, but you should realistically expect a low rate of return.

A more efficient process here would be personal contact. We suggest that as much as practicable a member of the school staff should contact dropouts in person or by phone and use the survey as an interview instrument to record their answers. Since the counseling staff is likely to have the most up-to-date information on these people, we suggest them to conduct the survey.

Sample Letter to Dropouts

(LETTERHEAD)

Dear Former Student:

According to our records, you were formally enrolled at (name of school) as a student, but you did not graduate or continue your education.

We want to maintain contact with our former students. You can help us improve the educational programs we offer if you will complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to (name of school) as soon as possible. Your remarks will remain strictly confidential, and we sincerely appreciate your assistance and frank comments. A stamped envelope is provided for your convenience.

Sincerely yours,

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY OF DROPOUTS

LAST NAME _____ FIRST NAME _____ MIDDLE NAME _____

PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS _____ TELEPHONE _____

1. In what curriculum were you enrolled at (name of school)? _____

_____

2. Which (one or more) of the following most accurately describe the reason(s) why you did not re-enroll? (check all that apply)

___ A. Denied re-admission by the school.

___ B. Joined the military service.

___ C. Desire to work full-time.

___ D. The school did not offer the right curriculum.

___ E. Other reasons (please comment) _____

_____

3. Are you currently employed? ___yes ___no

If yes, list name of employer _____

Address of employer _____

Specific job duties _____

4. Do you feel that the school(s) you attended prepared you for your job? ___ yes ___ no

If no, please comment on what you think should have been offered.

_____

_____

5. Do you plan to re-enroll? ___ yes ___ no ___ undecided

6. Please make any comments or suggestions which would help us improve our program. Most important, can you think of any programs, courses, services, etc., that we could provide that would have helped you to stay in school if they had been available to you?

GATHERING DATA FROM SYSTEM GRADUATES

The number of graduates each year from Georgia school districts can vary widely, and obtaining through a survey procedure their opinions as to the district's educational needs can easily become a logistical headache. However, their value as sources is too great for them to be ignored as a group. Therefore we suggest a sampling procedure which makes the problem manageable. If graduates are adequately polled, they will not only provide more information but the process itself will be a further indication to the community of the seriousness with which the needs assessment project is being conducted.

Procedure

1. Obtain a list of all graduates in the district for the past five years. (The five year stipulation means that you are looking for graduates whose recollections of their educational experiences is both fairly fresh and somewhat in line with that the district is presently doing.)

2. Make two lists.

   a. List 1 will be those graduates who went into further education (i.e., either college or vocational school).

   b. List 2 will be those graduates who entered the job market directly after graduation (military service also counts here).

3. Derive a random sample of each list.

   a. Restrict sample size to 10% of each list (if 10% of total graduates is less than 100, simply contact as many total graduates as possible).

   b. Number each list consecutively.

   c. Using a table of random numbers, select the sample to be polled. Do this for each list independently.

4. Develop survey instrument (a sample form is attached).

5. Execute the survey.

6. Compile and analyze the data.

NOTE: It is often extremely difficult to locate graduates, especially those who have left the area. In such cases where the address is not on file, a good source would be parents and grandparents. The latter especially are usually very stable and do not move a lot, and they keep up with family whereabouts.

COVER LETTER FOR GRADUATE SURVEY

(LETTERHEAD)

Dear Graduate:

You, as a graduate of (name of school) are one of our most valuable sources of suggestions for improving the quality of education we offer. We are certain that more information about your job or higher education experiences to date and ideas for improving the program you graduated from can be of great assistance in our efforts to do a better job of serving the people of our community.

We are presently engaged in an assessment of the educational needs of our students. Would you please help us in our efforts by taking a few minutes of your time to complete and return the enclosed questionnaire, using the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. We hope to receive all replies by (allow one week from date of mailing).

Please be assured that we will not use your name in any published reports of this survey. We appreciate your cooperation in this effort.

Sincerely,

SAMPLE GRADUATE FOLLOW-UP SURVEY FORM

I. Personal Information

Name _____

Present Address _____

_____

Telephone _____ Area Code _____

II. Employment Information

A. Are you in full-time military service? ____ yes ____ no
If you answered "yes," STOP HERE. Do not fill out the remainder of the survey, but mail this part back today.

B. If you answered "no" to IIA, please continue with the survey by indicating your employment status.
1. ____ Employed full-time (35 hours or more per week)
2. ____ Employed part-time (less than 35 hours per week)
3. ____ Unemployed
4. ____ Unavailable for employment (you cannot accept a job for one of the following reasons):
   a. ____ Receiving further education or training
   b. ____ Illness
   c. ____ Housewife or pregnancy
   c. ____ Other _____

C. If you are presently employed, please indicate the relationship of your job to the occupational training you received while in school. I am employed in an occupation:
1. ____ for which I received training
2. ____ which is related to my training
3. ____ which is not related to my training

D. If you are presently employed, please check below to indicate your approximate annual salary.
1. ____ less than $5,000.
2. ____ $5,001 to $7,000.
3. ____ $7,001 to $9,000.
4. ____ $9,001 to $11,000.
5. ____ $11,001 to $13,000.
6. ____ over $13,000.

E. Please give us your present job title and a brief description of your duties. _____

_____

_____

F. If the job described in "E" is not your first job since leaving school, please indicate your first job and a brief description of those duties. _____

_____

_____

1. Why did you leave this job? _____

_____

_____

G. As a result of your job experiences, what changes would you recommend which would better prepare our students for society after graduation? _____

_____

_____

III. Continuation of Education and Training

A. If you are in school now, please indicate below:
   1. ____ in school full-time
   2. ____ in school part-time

B. If you are in school now, please check. I am enrolled in a program
   1. ____ for which I received previous training
   2. ____ which is related to my previous training
   3. ____ which is not related to my previous training

C. If you are <u>not</u> in school, are you interested in continuing your education? _____ yes _____ no

D. Did your high school curriculum prepare you to make adult decisions about such things as career choices, family planning, and other adult responsibilities? If not, what changes would you recommend in the curriculum? _____

_____

D. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

E. If you are, or have been, in post-high school education within the past five years would you indicate below how you think our district's educational program can be improved to better prepare our students for such an experience? For example, is better equipment needed, more attention to reading skills needed, etc.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

V. SELECTING PARTICIPANTS

Proper and defensible needs assessment requires that a range of community interests be represented. Holding the needs assessment conferences at each school will help insure that we accomplish this. Listed below are some distinguishing criteria for membership on your committee:

1. Citizens at large.
   a. Parents of school age children.
   b. Representatives of community businesses, services, religious and cultural organizations.
   c. Representatives of school-affiliated organizations (PTA, etc.)
   d. Representatives from ethnic and socioeconomic groups.
   e. Representatives from governmental organizations.

2. Citizens directly involved in the educational process.
   a. School board members.
   b. Administrative staff.
   c. Classroom teachers and other certified personnel.
   d. Classified personnel.

3. Students.
   a. Currently enrolled students.
   b. Recent graduates.
   c. Drop-outs and withdrawals.

A. Selection Technique

Each school will select a needs assessment committee. There are several methods, from a random sampling technique which gives everyone an equal opportunity to be chosen to a closed technique placing the responsibility on one person with no guidelines. The technique explained here utilizes those aspects of each method which fit the conditions of needs assessment in Georgia. For the jargonists among us, it is a "direct controlled criterion--referenced selection strategy."

Responsibility for committee selection rests with the school principal. He chooses the committee using the following guidelines:

1. Membership at each school should number no more than 20 persons.
2. The total committee should represent at least the three membership categories listed above (citizens at large, citizens directly involved in the educational process, and students).
3. As much as possible all subdivisions of the membership categories should be represented.

*Note: Some members may have multiple qualifications. For example, a parent may also function as a representative of a school-affiliated organization.

4. The membership list should be complete one week before the first scheduled meeting.
5. The legitimacy of the committee will suffer appreciably if significant groups (e.g., ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic) are not represented.
6. Although one objective of the selection strategy is to get a range of experiences, the participants should be aware that the needs assessment procedure is for the benefit of the learners in the community and not an opportunity for vested interests to be aired. The product of the committee is agreement, not division.

B. Citizens at Large

The principal should contact community representatives directly--in person, if possible. The most efficient way to do this is by telephone. Some may have to be contacted by letter, but this approach yields the least positive response and should only be used in individual cases and as a last resort. A sample recruitment letter and reply form is at the end of this section.

There are several sources for names of interested citizens. Parents of school children can often be found through the PTA. Business and industrial leaders are available through the Chamber of Commerce, the Better Business Bureau, and local service clubs.

The persons contacted should be told the nature of the project and the importance of his contribution. He should also know that the procedure should take a maximum of two evenings in a week's time.

C. Educational Personnel

The school principal should select the educational personnel. In doing so, he should attempt to get representation from a variety of subject fields, ages, etc. Educational specialists, curriculum coordinators, and others who live near or work in the school should be recruited. School board members who live in the area should certainly not be overlooked.

D. Students

While there is little disagreement on the need for student input during this phase of the project, there is some question as to the actual methods of assuring it. Solutions range from student questionnaires administered during class time to special student elections to select committee representatives random selection of students from each grade and personal selection of student representatives by principals, counselors, or other educational personnel.

We have considered each method in light of these criteria--the time limits imposed on needs assessment and concern for a maximum of community legitimacy. The following suggested method reflects those concerns.

Student Selection

The authority for student selection lies with the principal. Because of the time and sophistication of effort required, only the high schools should select student representatives.

Student representatives should be carefully chosen to reflect the characteristics of the student population. Therefore, principals should select students from all races, both sexes, and with varying interests and levels of academic achievement. Special caution should be taken to avoid selecting only students whose record of participation is high. While it is true that they are often most dependable, it is also true that they may be spreading themselves too thin. Participation in the needs assessment project will be a relatively short but intense experience, and overburdened student leaders who accept the job more out of a sense of duty than of interest will not enhance the committee's function.

The number of students on the committee is an arbitrary decision. Since they are the eventual recipients of the project effort, token representation is indefensible. We suggest that 20% of the committee seats be manned by students. This will allow enough representation for them to be useful when the committee divides into teams.

Provision should also be made for students to represent as many subject areas as possible.

To avoid problems of legitimacy, we suggest that a notice be read in all classes stating briefly the purpose of the needs assessment committee, the amount of time required, and asking for student volunteers. No commitment need be made to include all students who respond on the committee. Rather, the principal should authorize those students not chosen to form a student advisory committee, whose duties would be to poll fellow students, formulate recommendations, and transmit them to the official student representatives. A sample form of the notice is at the end of this section.

To summarize, the selection of the student representatives should be made following these criteria:

Students number approximately 20% of the committee.
A student Advisory Committee to be composed of all other interested students.
Principal of each school selects students.
Students should reflect;
- all races
- both sexes
- varying academic achievement
- varying subject areas

High school students only.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE RECRUITMENT LETTER

(Letterhead)

Dear _____:

The (name of school district) is beginning a project to determine the critical educational needs of the citizens we serve. Our goal is to re-direct our efforts to provide for these needs.

We need your participation in this effort. As a (insert position or role, i.e., parent, business leader, etc.) your views are vital to the success of the project.

You and other members of the community are being asked to meet with the principal (name) for a total of not more than two evenings during the week of (insert date). Your participation will help insure a more responsive school system. The meeting will begin at ____(time) in the _____(building).

May we count on you? A reply form and envelope is enclosed. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

RECRUITMENT LETTER REPLY FORM

I will ___ will not___ be available to participate in the (name of system) assessment of critical educational needs.

Comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____
(Signature)

SAMPLE FORM FOR STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE ANNOUNCEMENT

TO: All Students

FROM: (Principal)

SUBJECT: Educational Needs Assessment

Do you ever feel like things would be a lot better around here if only somebody would listen to your opinions? Here's your chance.

The (name of school district) is looking for ways to improve the educational achievement of its students. We need your help to identify our most critical educational needs. That means we want the opinions of all students, not just the ones who are doing well now.

If you want to help, please contact (principal or his designate) before (next day, noon).

VI. ASSESSMENT AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

The maximum opportunity for community input is the needs assessment process in each school. The most intensive examination of goals and objectives occurs at this stage.

A. Physical Facilities

The school-level needs assessment should take place in an area large enough so that four or five groups can meet with relative privacy. A school gymnasium or cafeteria should be sufficient.

The area should contain: (1) sufficient tables and chairs; (2) paper tablets and pencils; (3) a small blackboard so that the decisions of the group can be continuously visible.

The principal should review his list of participants to be sure that all have been reminded of the meeting time and place. Confirmation can be accomplished by telephone.

B. Work Session #1

1. Introductory statement. The principal should convene the meeting with a few brief remarks covering: (1) thanking the participants for their interest and cooperation; (2) reviewing the purpose of the meeting (to establish a list of critical goals ranked according to their importance); (3) reviewing the overall purpose of the project (needs assessment); (4) outlining the procedure. We suggest that he end his introductory remarks with a mild challenge, such as, "Don't be bashful; tell us what your ideas are; we really want to know."

2. Division into groups. Each group should consist of a cross-section of the community. These guidelines will facilitate group selection:

   a. Principal divides committee into groups, assigning persons and group number to each.

   b. Each group contains at least one student, one community representative, and one educator (teacher, staff member, etc.).

   c. Limit group size to four or five.

   d. Limit number of groups to four or five.

e. Assign each group to a work area.

f. Each group should be assigned a number.

3. Distribution of materials. After the groups go to their respective work areas, the principal and his staff should distribute the following to each:

   a. Lists of goals and objectives.

   b. Test data.

   c. Other data (socio-economic, demographic, etc.).

   d. List of community concerns.

   e. List of concerns (a sample is at the end of this section).

4. Introduction to materials. Each group should allow 30 minutes for its members to become familiar with the materials for future use in Work session #2. The principal and his staff should "float" during this period to answer questions.

5. List of Concerns. Each participant should fill out the List of Concerns form as completely as possible. This form offers a good starting point for discussion.

6. Listing of goals and objectives. Once familiar with the material, each group should list no more than 10 goals and objectives, based on the data available.

7. Ranking goals. The ten goals agreed upon by the group should be listed on the blackboard. The group will then re-arrange them in order of criticality. A simple method of doing this is to have each member rank each goal on a three-point scale:

   3 - most critical. These goals are absolutely necessary for the student to attain to be a stable, happy, contributing member of society.

   2 - important. These goals are important for the student to attain, but not absolutely necessary.

   1 - least critical. These goals should be addressed only after the more critical ones have been attained.

   Beside each goal then, will be a point value for each group member. These should be added to get a group total for each goal. Goals should then be ranked according to score received (the higher the score, the higher the ranking). Ties will probably occur in the rankings; they should be broken by group discussion and consensus.

8. Transfer results to Goal Ranking Sheets. When the group reaches consensus on the ranking of goals, they should transfer these results to a Goal Ranking Sheet and deliver this to the principal. Each group member should sign the sheet. (A sample form is at the end of this section.).

When a goal ranking sheet has been received from each group, the first night's activities have concluded. However, the principal's activities have just begun.

C. Preparing for the Second Work Session.
The principal and his staff will receive each group's goal list. The following day they should collate these into a single list for the entire school. Following is a simple and efficient method of doing this:

1. Make a master list of all goals mentioned by all groups.

2. Record beside each goal its composite rank. Composite rank is the total of all rankings for the goal.

   Example: Suppose you had four groups at your first work session. A particular goal received rankings of 1st, 3rd, 4th, and 6th. Its composite ranking would be 1+3+4+6=14.

3. Rank the goals according to their composite ranking. The one with the lowest score will rank first, next lowest second, and so on. You will probably have some tied rankings. These should be included as the ties will be broken by consensus at the next work session.

4. Record the goals ranked from highest to lowest on a Goal Ranking Sheet similar to the ones handed you by the groups. Provide one copy for each member of the committee.

D. Work Session #2

1. Introductory statement. The principal should welcome back the participants and explain the composite ranking procedure accomplished on goals lists.

2. Distribute goals list to each person.

3. Determine school performance on each goal. Using the materials available, the committee will reach a consensus opinion on how well the school is working to accomplish each goal. This can be done by the use of a continuum, as follows:

Poor	Fair	Appropriate	Too Much
1 2	3 4	5 6	7 8

A ranking of 1 or 2 would indicate the conclusion that the school is not addressing this goal.

A ranking of 3 or 4 indicates that the school is doing an inadequate job; more needs to be done.

A ranking of 5 or 6 indicates the school is addressing the problem appropriately.

A ranking of 7 or 8 would indicate that the school is expending too much time and resources on this goal.

Example: Lets say that Goal F concerns the student's ability to read. Each committee member rates the school's performance on that goal (using evidence from the data he has) on the scale 1 to 8. The ratings are added and divided by the number of committee members. The result is a school performance rating on that goal.

If the rating for a goal is from 5 to 8, the goal should be deleted from the list - the school does not need to turn its attention to this goal any more than it is presently doing.

4. Re-rank goals statements. The committee should now consider whether any of the goals it has should be re-ranked in light of the assessment of the school's performance. Aside from deletions, only minor changes should occur here. For example, if the goal previously ranked 5th most critical had a school performance rating of 4 (fair) and the goal ranked 6th most critical had a school performance rating of 2 (poor), then consideration should be given to switching those rankings.

   The resultant list will be one of critical goals ranked in order of their importance and how well they are currently being met.

5. Translation of goals into needs statements. At this point in the process, the committee has gathered the essential elements of a statement of critical need. During the first work session it specified what the desired outcomes should be. In the second work session, it has established the relationship between those outcomes and the current situation.

   Formal needs statements will be written by the district superintendent. However, informal needs statements for each goal should be written at this level.

   For example one of the goals on the Phi Delta Kappa goals list provided in this package is, "Develop Skills to Enter a Specific Field of Work". Under that goal is the objective, "Develop Abilities and Skills Needed for Immediate Employment." Let's assume that this goal has been established as critical by the school committee. An adequate needs statement at this stage would be, "The needs assessment committee of _____ school has determined that

programs to teach skills needed to make our students self-sufficient in the world of work are inadequate. A comprehensive vocational education program should be developed within three years."

Procedure:

1. Have committee re-convene into the groups which were formed in the first work session.

2. Divide the list of critical goals as evenly as possible among the groups.

3. Each group constructs needs statements for its goal.

4. Goals and resultant needs statements are transmitted back to the principal and his staff.

6. Conclusion. When goals have been translated into needs statements, the job of the school needs assessment committee is concluded. The principal should congratulate them again for their efforts and promise each a follow-up report on the effects of their work.

E. Preparing for District Assessment

Following the school assessment, each principal will have a list of approximately ten goals and needs statements for those goals. They should be delivered to the project director the day after the conclusion of the second work session. To facilitate processing, a standard format should be used, such as the following:

Statement of Goal (most critical first) composite score

Statement(s) of critical need (most critical first)

Statement of Goal (second most critical) composite score

Statement(s) of critical need

Principals and others involved in the school-wide assessment of student needs should remain sensitive to community concerns at this point, even though the bulk of their involvement has concluded.

SAMPLE LIST OF CONCERNS

These statements are provided to guide your discussion of our educational needs. They are not intended to limit you--please feel free to go beyond them.

HOW WOULD YOU COMPLETE THESE STATEMENTS?

1. More emphasis should be placed on instruction in: _____

_____

2. Less emphasis should be placed on instruction in: _____

_____

3. Major problems facing the community and the school are: _____

_____

4. The responsibility of the school to teach moral and ethical values is:

_____

5. Job or career skills should be learned through: _____

_____

6. The student guidance--counseling program should: _____

_____

7. The educational needs of minority groups can best be solved by: _____

_____

8. Educational opportunities for adults in the community should: _____

_____

9. Student activity and athletic programs should: _____

_____

10. The school's responsibility in the solution of community problems is:

_____

11. The responsibility of the community for education is: _____

_____

12. The strengths of our educational system are: _____

_____

13. The weaknesses of our educational system are: _____

_____

14. What other things about education in our community concern you: _____

_____

SAMPLE GOAL RANKING SHEET

Group number ____ has reached consensus on the following goals. They are listed in descending order of criticality with group score assigned to each.

Goals (listed in order of criticality)	Group Score
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Signed:

identify the particular school where a student need is most critical as the school in which to install a project. Hopefully, the two lists will be parallel--they will agree on what the critical needs are. In cases where they aren't, a decision about priorities will need to be made, based on two factors:

a. Given the limited amount of funding available, which of these needs do we already have the most resources to address? For example, if you already have a reading staff which is adequate, but you need a more relevant reading program, you might give that priority over a need for which you have no resources at all. Thus, you can use existing resources to meet the maximum number of critical needs.

b. Is the identified need a district-wide one? You want the results of your needs assessment to be felt as widely as possible.

6. Revise the list as a result of step #5 into a list of district-wide critical student needs.

7. Construct critical needs statements for each critical need using the guidelines provided at the end of this section.

Because of limited resources both at the local level and in the total amount of other funds available, the district should attempt to decide on the one most critical need, and concentrate its efforts on that one. Of course, the circumstances may vary with school systems. If your system decides that it is imperative to address more than one need at this time, you should consult (for example) the Manual for Preparation of Title III ESEA Adoption/Adaptation Projects, pages 4 and 5, "Criteria to be used in evaluating adoption/adaptation applications," to review the criteria used to approve project applications. You should also search the literature to determine if there is a proven project available which will address your multiple needs.

This manual is available from:

Division of Program and Staff Development
Educational Improvement Unit
Georgia Department of Education
250 State Office Building
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

DISTRICT STAFF NEEDS ASSESSMENT POLL

TO: Staff

FROM: (Name)

RE: District Needs Assessment

As you all know, during this week the schools in our district will be compiling a list of their critical needs. We will use their information and our own to discover the critical learner needs of the school district.

Please fill out the form below and return to me on or before (insert date; 3 days from issuance of memo should be sufficient).

List below the critical learner needs as you see them in (school district). After you have stated the need, please provide any supporting data available which establishes it as critical. Try to limit your list to five, but if you have more, feel free to list them also.

1. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSTRUCTING NEEDS STATEMENTS

According to the definition, a critical student need exists when there is a discrepancy between the current achievement condition of the student and what his condition should be. A statement of this discrepancy must have at least three characteristics:

1. The data used to verify the need must describe the actual world of the learner, both as it exists now and as it should exist in the future.

2. No needs determination is final and complete. Any statement of needs is tentative, and we should constantly call its validity into question.

3. The discrepancies should be identified in terms of products or actual behaviors (ends), not in terms of processes (means).

Characteristic #3 is central and deserves elaboration. Consider this example paraphrased from the 1970 White House Conference Report of the Forum on Educational Technology by Roger Kaufman in his book Educational System Planning (Prentice-Hall, 1972, p. 29).

> Two men were walking down the street and both spied simultaneously a rather large man. The two men turned to each other and the first said, "Look at that fat man; he needs to go on a diet." The second man replied, "He is fat all right, but what he really needs is to jog!" The two men next went to talk to the subject of their discussion and said, "Hi, how do you feel?" The large man replied, "Well, not so good." The two men reveled for a moment in the excellent diagnosis and prescriptions. The large man continued, "I am the world champion weight lifter, and I have to put on about 20 or 30 pounds so that I can press the amount of weight that it will take to win the next world competition. I won't feel really good until the extra weight is on me and I then know I can win the championship again!"

As you can see, our two needs assessors saw a discrepancy and immediately assessed it in terms of process (diet, jog). They would have been much more correct in their diagnosis had the end results (behavior--weight lifting achievement) been uppermost in their minds.

A Form for Needs Statements

Although no one form is generally agreed upon, the most useful statements of critical needs share many of the characteristics of a performance objective. That is, it should state for terminal conditions:

1. what is to be achieved

2. by whom the outcome is to be displayed,

3. under what conditions, and,

4. what criteria will be used to measure success.

Let us now construct such a needs statement using a hypothetical situation. We will use a step-by-step procedure.

1. Determine "what is." According to results of the Test of Basic Social Studies Concepts given to all system students, a discrepancy has been determined. Our students showed a mean performance at the 35th percentile with a standard deviation of 15. Results for the state as a whole showed performance at the 50th percentile with a standard deviation of 10.

2. Determine "what should be." By one year from this date our students must show measurable improvement, which will be no less than a mean score at the 50th percentile with a standard deviation not to exceed 10.

3. Determine if there is a feasible method of getting from "what is" to "what should be." SDE has prepared a list of selected proven education practices which is available to all districts in Georgia. Other projects are available both in the literature and probably from your own experience.

4. Compose the needs statement. This may be accomplished by combining the results of steps 1 and 2.

VIII. WRAPPING UP

After compiling the results and transferring needs statements to the project application, five steps are suggested to help insure the success of your effort.

A. Review the procedure.
The project director should schedule a meeting with all school principals to inform them of the most critical needs chosen and allow them an opportunity to discuss any problems they may have had during the course of the procedure for assessing student needs.

The importance of this session should not be overlooked. The principals were directly involved in the most senstive and complicated steps in the procedure. Their inputs can give the project director valuable information as to how the total process may be made more efficient in assessing student needs. Thus, the next needs assessment will benefit greatly.

B. Get approval from the school board.
The district superintendent should submit his critical student need(s) to the school board for their approval. A review of the procedure used which emphasizes the extent of community input should facilitate their approval. Any suggestions from board members for changes in the procedure should be noted.

C. Inform the community.
All participants in the process should be informed of the results. A letter to each stating the need(s) chosen and the proposed alternatives for meeting the needs should be sufficient.

Further the district superintendent should issue a press release for the entire community.

In both the press release and the letters it would be a good idea to indicate that needs assessment will be an ongoing process in the school district, and that as a result continued suggestions from the community about how to improve the process of education will be welcomed.

D. Disseminate Results to Policy-Makers.
The results of a comprehensive student needs assessment are the products of hard work and deserve widespread dissemination.

Each school district superintendent might want to send copies of his district's list of critical needs to his Senators and Representatives at both the state and national levels. The benefit of having current and community-based information about educational priorities in Georgia could be an invaluable aid to them as they make educational decisions.

Superintendents might also want to share information with other districts. They might share what their needs are, how they arrived at them, and what possibilities exist for addressing them.

Teachers are also policy-makers, and at a critical level. Ongoing information about needs assessment and its results might be a good topic for discussion at faculty meetings.

E. The authors of this package sincerely hope that it has provided you with an efficient, defensible, and successful process. At the same time, we realize that unique problems--and novel solutions--will occur in Georgia's varied school districts.

We would very much appreciate knowing about both the problems and the solutions. We will use them to revise and upgrade the process. To simplify the matter, we have included a Needs Assessment Summary Report Form at the end of this section. Please fill this out as soon as possible after completion of the project and return to:

David A. Watts
Educational Improvement Unit
State Department of Education
250 State Office Building
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Thank you.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY REPORT

Return to:

David A. Watts
Educational Improvement Unit
State Department of Education
250 State Office Building
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

I. Personal Information

_____ _____
Name Position

_____
School District

_____
Address

_____
Phone

II. Please discuss below any and all aspects of the student Needs Assessment Project in your district with which you had problems. If your district found an acceptable solution, please describe it in detail.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

III. Please describe below any aspects of the project which you feel worked especially well in your district.

_____

_____

_____

_____

IV. Please record below any further comments or suggestions you may have.

IX. Selected Bibliography

1. Administrator's Manual for State Plan Programs. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1970.

2. Commission on Educational Planning. Educational Goals and Objectives: Administrator's Manual. Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., (no date given).

3. Division of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Manual for Preparation of Title III, ESEA Projects. Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education, 1969.

4. Fitzgerald, Peter. "Assessing the Perceived Educational Needs of Students," Education, vol. 92, no. 3 (Feb.-Mar., 1972), pp. 13-14.

5. Kaufman, Roger A., Educational System Planning. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972.

6. Needs Assessment: Booklet for Developing Evaluative Skills, no. 8. Tuscon, Ariz.: Educational Innovators Press, 1972.

7. State Educational Assessment Programs: 1973 Revision. Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1973.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

*These are not in any order of importance.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LEARN HOW TO BE A GOOD CITIZEN
A. Develop an awareness of civic rights and responsibilities.
B. Develop attitudes for productive citizenship in a democracy.
C. Develop an attitude of respect for personal and public property.
D. Develop an understanding of the obligations and responsibilities of citizenship.

LEARN HOW TO RESPECT AND GET ALONG WITH PEOPLE WHO THINK, DRESS AND ACT DIFFERENTLY
A. Develop an appreciation for and an understanding of other people and other cultures.
B. Develop an understanding of political, economic, and social patterns of the rest of the world.
C. Develop awareness of the interdependence of races, creeds, nations and cultures.
D. Develop an awareness of the processes of group relationships.

LEARN ABOUT AND TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE CHANGES THAT TAKE PLACE IN THE WORLD
A. Develop ability to adjust to the changing demands of society.
B. Develop an awareness and the ability to adjust to a changing world and its problems.
C. Develop understanding of the past, identify with the present, and the ability to meet the future.

DEVELOP SKILLS IN READING, WRITING, SPEAKING AND LISTENING
A. Develop ability to communicate ideas and feelings effectively.
B. Develop skills in oral and written English.

UNDERSTAND AND PRACTICE DEMOCRATIC IDEAS AND IDEALS
A. Develop loyalty to American democratic ideals.
B. Develop patriotism and loyalty to ideals of democracy.
C. Develop knowledge and appreciation of the rights and privileges in our democracy.
D. Develop an understanding of our American heritage.

LEARN HOW TO EXAMINE AND USE INFORMATION
A. Develop ability to examine constructively and creatively.
B. Develop ability to use scientific methods.
C. Develop reasoning abilities.
D. Develop skills to think and proceed logically.

UNDERSTAND AND PRACTICE THE SKILLS OF FAMILY LIVING
A. Develop understanding and appreciation of the principles of living in the family group.
B. Develop attitudes leading to acceptance of responsibilities as family members.
C. Develop an awareness of future family responsibilities and achievement of skills in preparing to accept them.

LEARN TO RESPECT AND GET ALONG WITH PEOPLE WITH WHOM WE WORK AND LIVE
A. Develop appreciation and respect for the worth and dignity of individuals.
B. Develop respect for individual worth and understanding of minority opinions and acceptance of majority decisions.
C. Develop a cooperative attitude toward living and working with others.

DEVELOP SKILLS TO ENTER A SPECIFIC FIELD OF WORK
A. Develop abilities and skills necessary for immediate employment.
B. Develop an awareness of opportunities and requirements related to a specific field of work.
C. Develop an appreciation of good workmanship.

LEARN HOW TO BE A GOOD MANAGER OF MONEY, PROPERTY AND RESOURCES
A. Develop an understanding of economic principles and responsibilities.
B. Develop ability and understanding in personal buying, selling and investment.
C. Develop skills in management of natural and human resources and man's environment.

DEVELOP A DESIRE FOR LEARNING NOW AND IN THE FUTURE
A. Develop intellectual curiosity and eagerness for lifelong learning.
B. Develop a positive attitude toward learning.
C. Develop a positive attitude toward continuing independent education.

LEARN HOW TO USE LEISURE TIME
A. Develop ability to use leisure time productively.
B. Develop a positive attitude toward participation in a range of leisure time activities--physical, intellectual and creative.
C. Develop appreciation and interests which will lead to wise and enjoyable use of leisure time.

PRACTICE AND UNDERSTAND THE IDEAS OF HEALTH AND SAFETY
A. Establish an effective individual physical fitness program.
B. Develop an understanding of good physical health and well being.
C. Establish sound personal health habits and information.
D. Develop a concern for public health and safety.

APPRECIATE CULTURE AND BEAUTY IN THE WORLD
A. Develop abilities for effective expression of ideas and cultural appreciation (fine arts).
B. Cultivate appreciation for beauty in various forms.
C. Develop creative self-expression through various media (art, music, writing, etc.).
D. Develop special talents in music, art, literature and foreign languages.

GAIN INFORMATION NEEDED TO MAKE JOB SELECTIONS
A. Promote self-understanding and self-direction in relation to student's occupational interests.
B. Develop the ability to use information and counseling services related to the selection of a job.
C. Develop a knowledge of specific information about a particular vocation.

DEVELOP PRIDE IN WORK AND A FEELING OF SELF-WORTH
A. Develop a feeling of student pride in his achievements and progress.
B. Develop self-understanding and self-awareness.
C. Develop the student's feeling of positive self-worth, security and self-assurance.

DEVELOP GOOD CHARACTER AND SELF-RESPECT
A. Develop moral responsibility and a sound ethical and moral behavior.
B. Develop the student's capacity to discipline himself to work, learn and play constructively.
C. Develop a moral and ethical sense of values, goals, and principles of free society.
D. Develop standards of personal character and ideals.

GAIN A GENERAL EDUCATION
A. Develop background and skills in the use of numbers, mathematics, and scientific concepts.
B. Develop a fund of information and concepts.
C. Develop special interests and abilities.